

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR ORD CENTRALIZED POSITIONS AT GS 14 and ABOVE

I. Questions About Submission

1. Where can I find guidance, forms and instructions for Centralized Positions?

- a. For contacts, instructions on how to prepare and submit nomination packets:
https://www.research.va.gov/resources/centralized_positions.cfm
- b. VHA Program Guide 1200.03 for centralized positions:
<https://www.research.va.gov/resources/policies/ProgramGuide-1200-03.pdf>
- c. OPM Research Grade Evaluation Guide (RGEG):
<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/functional-guides/gsresch.pdf>
- d. OPM Job Family Standard for Professional Work in the Medical and Health Group, 0600:
<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/standards/0600/gs0600.pdf>
- e. OPM Job Family Standard for Professional Work in the Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences Group, 0400:
<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/standards/0400/gs0400p.pdf>
- f. OPM Job Family Standard for Professional Work in the Mathematical Sciences Group, 1500:
<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/standards/1500/gs1500p.pdf>

2. **Is this program for clinicians?** No, the Centralized Positions program is only available for Title 5 and Hybrid Title 38 research scientists who are not licensed to practice medicine in the US.

3. **Is a researcher at my VAMC eligible for this program?** The Centralized Positions at GS 14 and above program is for research scientist positions whose salary is **funded by** VA Office of Research and Development ORD broad portfolios (BPs), actively managed portfolios (AMPS), or the Cooperative Studies Program (CSP). Administrative and/or supervisory positions funded by the VA Medical Center are **not eligible** for this program.

Note: VAMCs can request that ORD assess nominations for assignment at GS-14 and GS-15 for select administrative/supervisory positions that are funded locally and costed out to the medical care appropriation, provided that those positions include scientific investigation as a major duty (i.e. 25% more of duties). If the ORD panel recommends that such an incumbent be assigned at the higher grade, the appointment may only be affected with the approvals of the local VA medical facility Director and Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director within allocated medical care ceilings.

4. What type of positions can we request?

- a. Title 5 Non-Supervisory and Supervisory Research Positions at GS 14 or 15 for Current VA employees
 - b. Title 5 Supervisory and Non-Supervisory Research Positions at GS 14 or 15 for New appointments (e.g. Merit investigators who have just received an intent to fund).
 - c. The incumbent must meet the standards in the RGEG.
 - d. A minimum of a 5/8ths VA salaried appointment unless there is a waiver to this requirement (see ORD Program Guide 1200.15, Eligibility for VA Research Support).
- 5. Can someone be reassigned from GS 13 to GS 15?** Yes – provided the incumbent meets the standards/requirements for that GS level in the RGEG. The positions under the purview of the Centralized Positions are generally Excepted Service, term-limited appointments and these type of appointments do not have a 1-year time in grade requirement, unlike competitive positions, which do. Each approved centralized positions request is a new appointment that is not subject to the time in grade requirements. For more information on the time in grade rule, please see 5 C.F.R. § 300.601- 300.606 at: [eCFR :: 5 CFR Part 300 Subpart F -- Time-In-Grade Restrictions](#).
- 6. To whom should letters of support be addressed?** They should be addressed to the Director of the VA Office of Research and Development ORD portfolio that funds the position.
- 7. Can the ACOS/R serve as a local panel member?** If the ACOS/R is or would be the supervisor of the position, then this would be a conflict of interest.
- 8. I'm still a little unsure of what to do for Hybrid Title 38: Once the local panel has completed the 4670s and the submission packet is complete. Do we take it to our local HR and then once it is returned it gets sent up to your office?** Hybrid Title 38 (HT38) positions do NOT go through the same process as Title 5 positions. HT38 personnel actions follow a “qualification process” managed and processed by your local HR service. (see question #1.10) Please contact the Centralized Positions POC for the funding portfolio for guidance on what to submit to ORD. Instructions for submitting ORD-funded GS 14 and GS 15 HT38 positions for review can be found at: https://www.research.va.gov/resources/centralized_positions.cfm.

II. Human Resource Review Questions

- 1. What is the Local Panel Review Panel Evaluation?** Before the Centralized classification unit can evaluate the research PD, the local VAMC must convene a local review panel consisting of at least 3 subject matter experts. Each panel member must complete and sign a separate Position Classification Worksheets (VA Form 4670) for each packet. Each reviewer must be a VA employee that is at least at the GS level (or equivalent) sought by the nominee. No member should have a real or perceived conflict of interest with the nominee.

2. What must the VISN CCU classifier do for each packet submitted by the local R&D Service?

Since March 2023, first level review by your VISN centralized classification unit (CCU) is no longer required for research positions. For GS 14 and GS 15 positions, please follow the directions for submitting the nomination packets through IRBNet. See https://www.research.va.gov/resources/centralized_positions.cfm for instructions and guidance.

3. Why does the classification unit often change the job series we determine? We do understand that this can happen. Often, a candidate's education can fit 1 or more series. Office of Personnel Management defines the occupational series and this review and determination is conducted by the local classifier (see OPM Group Classification Standards above in I. 1.).

4. Can you explain the rationale for having both local review and a second central review? As the position is managed by the local VAMC, local review and classification is a very important step. The second level review by VACO is to ensure standardization of the positions and standards across the nation and to have approval at the VA ORD level by the CRADO/DEAN as these positions are funded by ORD.

5. You mentioned that this pertains to ORD funded positions only. I have an administrative position (ACOS/R) but I am also an independent investigator and just received a promotion to Full Professor at my academic affiliate. Can I still have my VAMC submit a centralized position request for a GS14 to a GS15?

Typically, the ACOS/R&D position is funded by the local Medical Center and is not an ORD centrally funded research position due to the administrative and supervisory nature of the role. Therefore, an ACOS position typically would not be submitted to The Centralized Positions program and instead would be classified by the HRMACS classification unit and funded locally. However, please see the answer to question I.3. Of note: VAMCs can request that ORD assess nominations for assignment at GS-14 and GS-15 for select administrative/supervisory positions that are funded locally and costed out to the medical care appropriation, provided that those positions include scientific investigation as a major duty (i.e. 25% more of duties).

6. We have been asked to list all publications as part of factor 4. Is this common practice or what should we be putting there along with text? Listing publications in factor 4 is acceptable, but not standard practice. You could summarize the type, number and quality of publications in Research Factor 4 instead.

7. Are the standards for data scientists or statisticians different than for an 0601 Research scientist? Their role is often not to be a PI but to be on LOTS of grants and offer their expertise in a critical way -- like a senior scientist in other fields. If the position is Title 5 and funded by ORD, then for the purposes of the Centralized Positions program, there are multiple occupational series that support data scientist other than 0601, including but not limited to, the Epidemiology - Medical and Health Care Series (0601); Actuarial Science Series (1510); Operations Research Series (1515); Statistician Series (1530), and IT Specialist - Data Administration (2210).

8. **Is the process any different if a GS-14 Research scientist is transferring from one VA to another VA?** If the duties of the Research Scientist remain the same at the new VA (i.e. are not administrative/supervisory), then the Position Description remains applicable and moves with the incumbent. Provided the research and duties have not changed, the Position description may be submitted to the centralized research classification unit for a new PD number and pen and ink changes for the location of the position.

III. **Questions about Supervisory Positions versus Non-supervisory Centralized Research Positions:**

1. **What are examples of supervisory duties?** Per VA Office of Research & Development Program Guide 1200.03 for Centralized Positions of Research Scientist, GS-14 and Above, the Scope on page 3 notates: This guide can be used for both non-supervisory research investigators or supervisory research investigators serving in a significant research leadership role.

Examples of Supervisory functions include:

- A. Completing and signing performance evaluations;
- B. Developing performance standards.
- C. Addressing performance issues;
- D. Making formal recommendations for superior performance awards, etc.
- E. Giving advice, counsel, or instruction to employees on both work and administrative matters
- F. Interviewing candidates for positions in the unit; recommending appointment, or reassignment to such positions.
- G. Hearing and resolving complaints from employees, referring group grievances and more serious unresolved complaints to a higher-level supervisor or manager.
- H. Effecting minor disciplinary measures, such as warnings and reprimands, recommending other action in more serious cases;
- I. Identifying developmental and training needs of employees, providing or arranging for needed development and training;
- J. Finding ways to improve production or increase the quality of the work directed.

Examples of non-supervisory Research Management functions include:

- A. Formulating and planning of experiments;
- B. Mentoring and training of students, fellows and junior researchers;
- C. Technical oversight of research staff working on a project.

2. **Where are supervisory GS-14s and GS-15s positions submitted and what is the process?** Please see the guidance for submission centralized positions packets found at: [Centralized Positions: GS-14 & Above \(va.gov\)](https://www.va.gov/centralized-positions-gs-14-and-above/).

3. **If the PI isn't supervising the individuals, they hire in support of their research grants, then who is?** That is a local determination. Please see question III.1 for examples of supervisory and non-supervisory duties.
4. **What if a non-supervisory Research Scientist transfers to a new position that is supervisory position or non-research?** Non-research Positions would need to be funded and classified locally. Supervisory Research Scientist Positions funded by ORD may be submitted through the processes outlined at this website: [Centralized Positions: GS-14 & Above \(va.gov\)](#). Note: until 4/1/2025, non-supervisory positions previously reviewed by the ORD Centralized Positions panel may submit an expedited request for re-classification as supervisory if the GS level is unchanged (see the documents section at this website for more guidance): [Centralized Positions: GS-14 & Above \(va.gov\)](#).
5. **The problem with converting to non-supervisory PDs means you can't be the person to sign performance appraisals. If one supervises other researchers for the study (which is for the scientific responsibilities), then that is an issue for them to do performance reviews in ePerformance.** Correct. Scientific responsibilities do not apply to supervision. A non-supervisory position can provide input on a performance plan but should not be completing the performance evaluation unless it is for 2 or fewer staff. In ePerformance it is possible to designate someone as a Matrix rater who would provide input but not complete the evaluation or sign it. A supervisory position would be funded locally and classified locally.